

P22032.A01

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant : Mitsuru TAKAI et al.

Serial No : Not Yet Assigned

Filed : Concurrently Herewith

For : NEXT PROCESS-DETERMINING METHOD, INSPECTING METHOD  
AND INSPECTING APPARATUS

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Prior to calculation of the filing fees and the examination of the above-identified patent application on the merits, the Examiner is respectfully requested to amend the claims as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows (a marked-up copy of the claim amendments is provided as an attachment to this Amendment):

3. (Amended-Clean Text) A next process-determining method according to claim 1, wherein the sample data is formed by image data obtained by picking up an image of the sample object, the digital data being composed of data of pixels formed in picking up the image of the sample object.

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Please add new claims 8, 9, and 10 as follows:

---8. A next process-determining method according to claim 2, wherein the sample data is formed by image data obtained by picking up an image of the sample object, the digital data being composed of data of pixels formed in picking up the image of the sample object.

9. A next process-determining method according to claim 8, wherein the reference sample object is changed with a lapse of time.

10. A next process-determining method according to claim 9, wherein the compressed sample data which is formed based on an image of the sample object picked up on an immediately preceding occasion is sequentially changed to the reference data.---

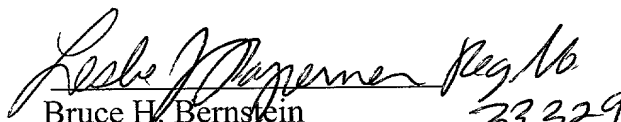
#### REMARKS

By the above amendment, claim 3 has been amended and claims 8-10 have been added to delete multiple dependency.

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If there should be any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned  
at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mitsuru TAKAI et al.

  
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MARKED-UP COPY OF AMENDED CLAIMS

3. (Amended) A next process-determining method according to claim 1 [or 2], wherein the sample data is formed by image data obtained by picking up an image of the sample object, the digital data being composed of data of pixels formed in picking up the image of the sample object.

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